(c) the major cities which are directly connected by air with Rajkot Airport?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) There are three daily air services being operated by Air India and Jet Airways to/from Rajkot airport.

(b) Government has laid down route dispersal guidelines with a view to achieve better regulation of air transport services within which airlines are free to operate air services to specific stations, depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability.

(c) Only Mumbai is air linked with Rajkot presently.

Expatriate pilots

2779. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of out-of-job Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) holders is close to 400 and at the same time airlines continues to hire about 1000 expatriate pilots;

(b) whether India is one of the few countries that allows foreign pilots to fly domestic routes;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether it is also a fact that many CPL holders after spending around Rs. 35 lakhs on flying course abroad had been forced to take up call centre jobs to pay back their education loans; and

(e) if so, the steps taken by Government to solve this problem?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (e) The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) does not maintain records of unemployed pilots. DGCA validates foreign licences as per the provisions contained in Aircraft Rules, 1937 and Civil Aviation Requirements. 626 expatriate pilots work with various scheduled operators in the country.

Harassment of passengers by taxi drivers at IGIA

2780. SHRI N. BALAGANGA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that air passengers are being harassed by the prepaid taxi drivers at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), Delhi;

(b) if so, the details of the proposals; and

(c) whether Government has any proposal to have separate prepaid taxi counters exclusively for the Members of Parliament at IGIA?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) As per the system in place for hiring taxies at the IGI taxi drivers do not have any leeway of choosing the passengers and they have to take the passengers who have been allotted their taxi. The taxis at the Domestic terminal are made to stand in the bays and the

passengers are allotted the bays thereby removing any chance for the taxi drivers to harass the passengers. At the International terminal, the taxis are allotted as the passenger comes with the prepaid receipt and the first passenger boards the first available taxi. Delhi Police is also taking strong action against touts operating at IGI Airport. In the year 2009, so far 122 touts have been apprehended by the Delhi Police.

(c) There is no such proposal under consideration.

Upgradation of Rajkot Airport

2781. SHRI VIJAYKUMAR RUPANI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Airports Authority of India (AAI) is to acquire land from railways authority for the purpose of upgradation of Rajkot Airport;

(b) if so, whether the railways authority has agreed to give land to the AAI and when will the land be transferred from railways authority; and

(c) by when AAI proposes to complete that work of upgradation of Rajkot Airport?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Airports Authority of India (AAI) has requested Railway Authorities for transfer of 14.7 hectares of railway land for extension of runway to upgrade Rajkot Airport.

(b) and (c) The railway authority had proposed to transfer the requested land to AAI on lease at market rate with the condition that AAI has to rehabilitate the affected residential units at its own cost. This proposal was estimated to cost Rs. 50 crore. Keeping in view, its other financial liabilities and limited funds, AAI could not accept this proposal.

In the meantime, the State Government of Gujarat has proposed construction of a Greenfield airport at a different location.

Conditions of Air India

†2782. SHRI KRISHAN LAL BALMIKI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister has expressed concern over the critical conditions prevailing in Air India;

(b) the persons responsible for this condition of Air India/Indian Airlines; and

(c) whether in order to improve upon in this regard both the Airlines can be separated as was the case earlier?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) The Government is seized of the financial condition of Air India. A GoM is monitoring the financial package/equity infusion for the airline. The reasons for losses are mainly due to low yields and load factors caused by the prevalent economic recession and the high fuel prices of 2008.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.